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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000509

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EUR/NCE, DRL/MLGA FOR LAURA JORDAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/09/2017
TAGS: PHUM PREL EUN EZ
SUBJECT: CZECHS TORN ON ISSUE OF COUNTRY-SPECIFIC SPECIAL
RAPPORTEURS

REF: STATE 60672

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Mike Dodman
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) MFA Human Rights Department official Jan Kaminek
informed Poloff on May 9 that the Czech government has not
yet decided how it will vote on the issue of UNHRC
country-specific mandates for Cuba and Belarus. Kaminek said
the decision will be made by Foreign Minister Karel
Schwarzenberg next week.

¶2. (C/NF) Kaminek explained the difficult choice facing the
Czechs: the upcoming vote is for a package of reforms. To
vote for the package is to (1) join the consensus of 45
countries, and (2) adopt much-needed reforms for the UNHRC,
reforms on which the Czechs have worked diligently over the
past year. The price for consensus and reform, however, is
the elimination of the country-specific mandates for Cuba and
Belarus. To vote against the reform package is to essentially
destroy the UNHRC.

¶3. (C/NF) Kaminek said these mandates, while important, are
only symbols. They have no teeth. Special rapporteurs cannot
enter either Cuba or Belarus, and their recommendations carry
no weight. With a heavy heart, Kaminek informed Poloff that
the Human Rights Department will therefore recommend voting
for the package. In the view of the HR Department, the
importance of symbols is far outweighed by the importance of
the reforms (which, he pointed out, have special procedures
that do/do have teeth, such as the Universal Periodic Review
and the Complaint Mechanism). He could not guess what FM
Schwarzenberg's final decision will be on the issue.
GRABER